

Implementation of the ‘*Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka*’ Policy at Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta

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Abstract: This research seeks to find out how the implementation of independent learning on an independent campus is implemented by Syaif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta. This research uses descriptive qualitative methods with the data collection techniques used are observation, interviews and documentation, with primary data sources coming from the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Chairperson of Quality Assurance Agency, Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs Faculty of Sharia and Law and Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs Faculty of Science and Technology. Data analysis uses a flow of activities, namely reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions. The study found that ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’ implementation at UIN Jakarta faces challenges in curriculum alignment and partner engagement, but also presents opportunities for enhanced student autonomy. In addition, this research can provide added value to partner institutions, especially Universitas Islam Negeri in Indonesia, by providing in-depth analyses of the best way to combine national policies with local and religious needs at Universitas Islam Negeri.

Keywords: Policy; ‘*Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka*’.

INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy released by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology intends to reform the higher education system in Indonesia to make it more relevant to the world of work and global developments. The policy encourages universities to provide greater flexibility to students in ensuring that their learning paths are in line with their interests and future careers (Siswanto & Hadi, 2024). ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’ offers various options such as internships, entrepreneurial projects, student exchanges, and research outside the main study programmes, all of which are expected to prepare graduates who are better equipped to compete in the era of globalisation (Bhakti, Simorangkir, Tjalla, & Sutisna, 2022; Sahertian et al., 2022; Tohir, 2020). In the plan to prepare students to face the transformation of the world of work, social development, culture, and rapid

technological development, students must prepare their competencies in order to meet the demands of the times (Akmalia, Nst, & Siahaan, 2023). The demands placed on Higher Education are to be able to conceptualise and conduct innovative ways of upgrading so that students can achieve learning outcomes covering action assessments such as attitudes, insights, and skills in a maximum way. This is also in accordance with Learning 4.0, which is known as the latest breakthrough that is student-centred (Siahaan, Syukri, & Akmalia, 2022; Wibowo, Santoso, & Widiyanto, 2020), where this approach can not only increase highly educated students but also be able to create an updated mindset that can respond to life's challenges, increase creativity and innovation in various perspectives of life (Azizah, Ar, & Khairuddin, 2015; Tan et al., 2018).

The 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' programme, which is a new learning policy, certainly provides a lot of space for students to gain insight and knowledge in higher education in a flexible way (Muflihini & Warsito, 2024), which does not only require sitting in class to explore lectures, but can also gain knowledge and expertise according to their competence, through programmes developed by colleagues outside the campus. Universities should authorise all students to make a firm decision as to whether or not they wish to take the 40 credits offered at the off-campus programme or the 2 semesters they have to spend at the partner campus. In addition, students are also allowed if they want to take credits in other study programmes without ignoring the entire semester that must be passed, in the sense that they are allowed to take credits in other study programmes for one semester within their own campus (Purwanti, 2021).

The study in 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' shares challenges and opportunities for the development of innovation, creativity, capacity, character, and desire of students, and increases independence in seeking and creating insights through reality such as using various skills, concrete problems that occur in the field, social interaction, cooperation, self-management, achievement requirements, goals and achievements. Through a well-designed and implemented independent learning programme, students' hard and soft skills will be firmly established. As for the research results (Puspitasari & Nugroho, 2021), reported that the 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' policy is expected to be able to respond to various problems related to learning and employment in Indonesia, through the close interaction between universities and employment partners, as well as the existence of off-campus programmes with the aim of expanding student knowledge and experience, and it is also expected that students will have additional points and be able to compete in facing challenges in the global era.

Research (Mei, Naja, & Kusi, 2022), revealed that the procedure for developing 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' is a must that must be applied

by all universities because the curriculum reflects and benchmarks competencies for future alumni. The results of the study further concluded that all educational elements on campus are ready to implement the 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' programme, assuming all results are above 50%, where some of the obstacles faced related to this programme are mostly caused by the lack of intensive socialisation in several study programmes (Mudrikah et al., 2022). In line with the results of the relevant research above, regulations in higher education development, through the 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' programme, must rely on the principles of usefulness and real goals. Scientifically, the impact of 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' at UIN Jakarta on socio-religious development can be seen at three levels, namely at the individual level students are more socially sensitive, moderate in spirit, creative in preaching, but at the institutional level UIN is getting stronger its image as a moderate Islamic campus with real contributions to society and for the community level is greatly helped through student-based socio-economic-religious empowerment. The gap in this research lies in the lack of longitudinal studies to see the continuity of the impact of the 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' program on the performance of graduates in the world of work and further research. Based on this longitudinal study, it is necessary to track 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' alumni several years after graduation-with career parameters, empowerment, and academic or professional contributions.

State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, the highest institution in education that has distinctive characteristics in integrating religious knowledge with general knowledge, faces unique challenges in implementing the 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' policy. Has the implementation of the 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' policy at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta been running optimally, or even gradually and or not implemented at all? In addition, the main focus of this research is to assess how the policy affects professional skills, religious knowledge, and the contribution of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta graduates to social-religious harmonization and community welfare. On the one hand, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta must comply with national regulations regarding higher education, but on the other hand, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta must ensure that Islamic values are maintained in every aspect of education, including in 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' programmes. Thus, the adaptation of the 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' policy at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta requires a careful and planned approach so that graduates of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta not only excel in science, but also have a strong religious understanding. Based on this, this research aims to analyse how the implementation of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka policy at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta and

evaluate its impact on student and graduate performance. The main focus of this research is to assess how the policy affects professional skills, religious knowledge, and the contribution of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta graduates to religious social harmonisation and community welfare.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research applies descriptive qualitative methods, with data collected in the form of words and images, not numbers (Satori & Komariah, 2017). This research intends to find a picture and data that is more real, perfect, and allows and facilitates researchers to carry out in-depth observations and research. This qualitative research design, provides more details about sampling, instruments, and data collection procedures, and deepens the explanation of the data analysis process. A case study is the right choice which provides an in-depth understanding of the implementation of 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' in the context of UIN Jakarta, then allows researchers to explain social, religious, and academic complexities that cannot be captured by survey methods alone. And finally, because it can produce practical and theoretical recommendations for the development of 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' in PTKIN nationally. The source of data in this research is through a triangulation approach, which is the use of several complementary data collection techniques. This method includes observation, interviews, and documentation as data sources to confirm the findings in order to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of the research subject, as said by the author (Yumnah, Iswanto, Pebriana, Fadhillah, & Fuad, 2023) that the main data sources of qualitative research consist of words and actions, while additional data include documents and so on. Based on this, the data in this section is categorised into words and actions, written data sources, photographs, and statistics.

Primary data sources in this study are the Vice Chancellor I, Chairperson of Quality Assurance Agency (LPM), Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs of the Faculty of Sharia and Law, Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs of the Faculty of Adab and Humanities. Meanwhile, secondary data sources include curriculum documents, lists of lecturers and students, profiles of the State Islamic University under study, and photo documentation of activities that support the implementation of the independent curriculum policy. The data collection instrument used in this research uses interviews. The data collection instrument used in this study used semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions related to 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' implementation, institutional readiness, curriculum design, and student engagement. Researchers prepare a list of questions that are compiled by adjusting the indicators to be studied. The data collection technique in this research involves 3 (three) steps,

namely observation, interview and document study. This triangulation approach through observation, interviews, and documentation helps researchers to obtain a more complete and valid picture of the implementation of the independent curriculum at state Islamic universities, taking into account various points of view and supporting evidence, thus producing more reliable and comprehensive findings.

The data analysis used is using descriptive analytical method, where this method describes the data collected in the form of words, pictures, and not numbers. Data obtained from various sources, such as manuscripts, interviews, field notes, and other documents, are then explained in detail to provide a clearer understanding of the reality or reality that exists (Mardawan, 2020). This analysis continues since before the researcher is in the field, while in the field, and continues until writing the research results. This is as explained by (Sugiyono, 2017). In conducting data analysis, researchers apply the flow of activities as described by (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yusuf, 2017), namely reducing data, presenting data, making conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Student Exchange

The implementation of the student exchange programme at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta has been running long before the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy was officially launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture. RM, who is the person in charge of curriculum and learning at the Quality Assurance Agency (LPM), said that student exchange programmes are not new to UIN Jakarta. He said that:

“Student exchanges on our campus have already taken place. Actually, this is part of the programme that we have always implemented, not only when ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’ started. So, it's been since the beginning, plus ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’, making us stronger there.”

Furthermore, RM explained that this programme is not limited to the national scope, but has expanded to the international level. This is evidenced by the active participation of students from various Asian countries who take part in the exchange programme at UIN Jakarta campus. According to him, the presence of foreign students in the academic environment provides a multicultural atmosphere that enriches inter-student interactions, while expanding the horizons and international networks of local students.

"Our students here are also the result of international student exchanges. Several other Asian countries are also included in our list of exchange students.."

RM's findings are reinforced by official UIN Jakarta news documents released on 31 July 2024 through the uinjkt.ac.id website (Ramdhani, 2025). The news reported that UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta has established a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with INTI International University & Colleges Malaysia. This cooperation includes a student exchange programme for 1-2 semesters that allows UIN students to attend lectures at INTI with a credit earning transfer system. In fact, this MoU is not only unidirectional, but also opens opportunities for foreign students to enter UIN Jakarta through student mobility schemes and paid summer courses. The Rector of UIN Jakarta calls this cooperation an important part of the campus internationalisation strategy in the frame of Merdeka Belajar.

From the point of view of developing students' skills and competencies, the programme is considered to have a significant positive impact. WR I emphasised that through cross-cultural interactions and across academic systems, students can develop better social, communication and adaptation skills. He said:

"I we focus on student skills, I see that students can communicate well with each other. Even though they come from different countries, it is not an obstacle in socialising between them. Of course, this opens up opportunities for them to share their insights.."

In line with what WR I and RM said, Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Sharia and Law added that his faculty sees this programme as a strategic opportunity in building student academic networks. He considered that students from FSH who participated in student exchanges, both through national and international 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' schemes, showed significant improvement in public speaking skills and the ability to think across cultural perspectives. He stated that this programme not only provides academic experience, but also hones students' social sensitivity. Meanwhile, Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Science and Technology highlighted that while student exchanges are generally associated with the social sciences and humanities, in the context of his faculty, students majoring in engineering and science also benefit greatly. He mentioned that there are students from FST who participate in exchanges to partner universities in the country and abroad, especially to explore research methodologies and applied technology. This opens new horizons for students to understand the application of science in a global context.

The two secondary informants also underlined the importance of a mentoring system and curriculum alignment as part of the exchange programme's success strategy. They agreed that challenges such as course conversion and equality of learning outcomes still need to be refined, but overall, the programme has worked well and contributed significantly to strengthening the internationalisation of the campus.

Internship/Work Practice

The internship programme as a form of implementing the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy has been carried out at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta with a relatively structured approach. RM from LPM, explained that the university opens opportunities for students to join the internship programme through an internal selection system that considers various aspects, including institutional readiness and resources. He explained:

"We, in implementing this MBKM, open opportunities for every student to participate in it. However, the service is provided with a selection system. So, if many people register, it does not mean that they will immediately participate. Everything is adjusted to the conditions of the campus, especially in financial matters."

Furthermore, he said that the campus actively builds networks of cooperation with various external institutions, both from the industrial sector, non-governmental organisations, to government agencies. This effort is intended to give students access to practical experience that is relevant to their field of study. This cooperation is the foundation in developing the quality of internships that are not just a formality, but are truly meaningful for the formation of student work competencies.

This commitment is in line with the contents of the Appendix to the Decree of the Rector of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta Number 1321 of 2021, which explicitly states that the internship programme must be carried out under the guidance of two parties, namely supervisors from the campus and field supervisors from external partners. The document also explains that the recognition of credit hours for internship programmes is calculated in detail, namely 1 (one) credit hour is equivalent to 45.33 hours of internship/practice work activities. This provision becomes the formal basis in assessing the academic weight of student internship activities, which can then be converted into learning outcomes. On the other hand, although the policy has provided clear technical guidelines, the implementation of grade conversion at the faculty and study programme levels still poses challenges. This is in line with the interview findings which show that the translation of policies into academic practices does not always run smoothly or uniformly between units.

In the context of evaluation, WD I FSH mentioned that the implementation of the internship programme did not encounter major obstacles administratively. However, there are some internal notes that are of concern in institutional evaluation, especially related to the incentives of internship supervisors:

“In terms of evaluation, so far there are no fatal problems. But there are lecturers who speak out, that there needs to be an additional incentive for the pamong lecturer or internship supervisor. But this is not a fatal problem.”

Another issue that also arises relates to the conversion of grades. LPM as an academic quality supervisory institution recognises that the process of converting internship scores into learning outcomes sometimes raises doubts at the study programme level. RM said:

“If you look at the existing reports, the obstacle to the implementation of internships is indeed the issue of grade conversion. Sometimes, we find it difficult to determine the grade conversion for student internships.”

Meanwhile, Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Science and Technology explained a slightly different challenge. In FST, internship programmes are mostly related to laboratories, technology industries, and government technical agencies. He said that the biggest challenge lies in the availability of partners and the sustainability of cooperation. In addition, the timing of internships often clashes with the faculty's internal academic calendar, which requires its own adjustments.

“For us, sometimes the obstacle is not only the conversion of grades, but also the technicalities of placement. There are students who have difficulty finding an internship in their field. We are building strategic partnerships so that we don't have to start from scratch every year.”

In general, the three informants share the same view that the internship programme contributes greatly to students' career readiness. However, technical notes such as supervisor incentives, grade conversion schemes, and partner availability, are things that need to be continuously evaluated and refined so that the implementation of this programme is more optimal.

Teaching Assistance

Teaching assistance activities were first known at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, especially through the Field Experience Practices (PPL) model at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching Sciences. RM from LPM said

that the implementation of teaching assistance at UIN Jakarta is not yet evenly distributed in all faculties or study programmes, but it has been well implemented and structured in the teaching programmes. According to him:

“This activity has actually been carried out, for certain study programmes. This is mostly implemented in Tarbiyah or Education. So, as a whole, this activity has not been implemented by all study programmes.”

In terms of students' contribution to the institutions where they teach, RM emphasised that so far there have been no reports indicating significant problems in the field. In fact, students are considered capable of adapting and carrying out their teaching duties well.

"If we look at the study programmes in Tarbiyah, their contribution to the educational units where they practice teaching so far looks good. There are no strange reports about their teaching activities..”

In line with this statement, the Vice Dean I of FSH said that although his faculty is not education-based, there is interest from some students to follow this assistance model, especially those who have an interest in counselling and educational communication. However, he admitted that structurally, FSH has not developed a systematic teaching assistance scheme due to the limitations of an appropriate curriculum. Nevertheless, he views that in the future this programme has great potential to be developed as a form of service as well as contextual social communication practices. From the perspective of the Vice Dean I of FST, the implementation of teaching assistance has not yet become an integral part of the study programme at the faculty. He stated that the teaching approach in FST is more applied in the laboratory or technology-based, but he also did not rule out the possibility that FST students could contribute in the form of STEM teaching in partner schools in the future.

“We don't have a formal teaching assistance programme like in Tarbiyah. But there are some students who participate in teaching programmes in schools through KKN activities or other service programmes. This could be a precursor to a science or technology-based assistance model.”

Thus, it can be concluded that teaching assistance activities at UIN Jakarta have been actively running, but are still limited to educational study programmes. ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’ functions as a formal reinforcement tool for activities that already exist. In non-educational faculties, this programme has not been running systematically, but shows the potential to grow if supported by curriculum strengthening and institutional policies.

Research

In general, opportunities and access for students to be involved in research are wide open, although the realisation on the ground still faces some challenges. RM from LPM explained that:

“We have also organised various collaborations with external parties, especially in terms of this research. There are with BRIN, and other relevant organisations.”

Through this collaboration, students have the opportunity to join lecturers' research projects, especially those that are collaborative in scale. One of the main outputs of this activity is scientific publications. Furthermore, the main challenge is not in the technical aspects of implementation, but in the aspects of student participation and research outcomes. This statement is in line with the official report released by BRIN (20 February 2023) regarding the research collaboration between UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and the Centre for Environmental Research and Clean Technology (PRLTB). In the cooperation agreement signed at the FST Building of UIN Jakarta, it is stated that this collaboration includes joint research, teaching, student mentoring, and joint scientific forums. Head of BRIN's PRLTB, Sasa Sofyan Munawar, emphasised that the scope of the collaboration has covered the interests of the faculty and the research centre in a balanced manner. On the other hand, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology, Nashrul Hakiem, stated that this collaboration is not only aimed at lecturers, but is also expected to be a means of implementing ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’, especially through student involvement in research activities and academic mentoring. This collaboration opens up concrete opportunities for active student involvement in the research ecosystem, and becomes institutional support in line with the spirit of Merdeka Belajar.

RM's statement is in line with that expressed by the Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Sharia and Law. According to him, the research culture among FSH students is still in its infancy. Many students do not yet feel confident enough to engage in large-scale research, let alone those involving external partners. He said that:

"Our students sometimes focus more on their thesis. Even though the opportunity to participate in lecturer research or external collaboration already exists. Maybe we need a more personalised mentoring approach.”

Meanwhile, the Vice Dean I of FST gave a more technical view. He mentioned that several study programmes in FST have actually encouraged

students to conduct applied research, especially in the fields of information technology, biotechnology, and environmental engineering. However, involvement in 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' based research is still low because students mostly choose the regular final project path. He explains:

"We actually already have research projects in the lab that students can participate in. But when it comes to the MBKM framework, there are not many. Maybe it's because students don't understand that it can be converted into MBKM credits."

Despite a number of open collaborations, both with national research institutions and the industrial sector, the main challenge remains the students' awareness and courage to take an active role in research projects. All three informants agreed that internal encouragement from supervisors is needed so that students are not just participants, but also active contributors in the research process. Thus, the implementation of research programmes within the 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' framework at UIN Jakarta can be said to have a sufficient foundation, but needs further optimisation in terms of the intensity of student involvement, strengthening methodological capacity, as well as managing incentives and a more flexible conversion system.

Humanitarian Project

The implementation of the humanitarian project programme as one of the 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' activities at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta is still at the conceptual stage and internal discourse. This was revealed openly by RM from the Quality Assurance Agency (LPM), who said that the implementation of humanitarian projects has not been carried out in real terms in the campus environment. According to RM, administratively, the humanitarian project scheme has been listed in the Rector's regulation document and 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' implementation guidelines. However, at the technical level, no study programme or faculty has specifically proposed this programme. The lack of implementation is not due to rejection, but rather the absence of cooperation schemes or concrete humanitarian cases as an entry point. He stated honestly:

"Apparently, there is no project."

In line with this, the Vice Dean I of FSH added that although scientifically students from his faculty are very close to social and humanitarian issues, a programme that is truly packaged in the format of a "humanitarian project" as intended by MBKM has never been carried out. According to him:

“We often encourage students to get involved in social activities, but not yet in the formal scheme of MBKM's humanitarian projects. Maybe in the future we need to design it more seriously.”

Meanwhile, the Vice Dean I of FST highlighted more structural limitations. He mentioned that in the context of the exact faculty, humanitarian projects have not become a familiar learning model. According to him:

“Honestly, there are no FST students who have participated in humanitarian projects specifically. But if for example there is a cross-faculty programme or one that involves appropriate technology for humanitarian assistance, it could be interesting.”

All three informants agreed that humanitarian projects as part of ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’ have yet to find a concrete form at UIN Jakarta. This can be caused by several factors: there are no relevant strategic partners, no contextual urgency, and limitations in the design of activities that can be converted into academic credit schemes. Nevertheless, there is hope that this type of activity can be revived through collaboration across faculties and institutions, as well as integration with existing social community activities.

Entrepreneurial Activities

Entrepreneurial activities as part of the implementation of the ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’ programme at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta have not been implemented optimally. WR I said that although regulations and administrative basis are available, the implementation of entrepreneurial activities has not shown significant development.

“Entrepreneurial activities were also discussed in our evaluation. But this has not been fully implemented. One of the main causes of this stagnation is the lack of interest from the students themselves. Although the rector's regulation has contained a support scheme for entrepreneurship development, in practice, there has been no proposal or submission of entrepreneurial programmes by students formalised into the ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’ framework.”

The Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Sharia and Law confirmed similar conditions. He said that:

“We often see students with business ideas in the media or digital creative fields. But it's just stuck in coursework. Not until they submit it as an MBKM programme.”

On the other hand, the Vice Dean I of FST recognised that the main challenges for students in starting entrepreneurial activities are in the aspects of capital, courage to take risks, and time constraints. He mentioned that:

"FST students often make technology projects or tools. But they are still hesitant to turn it into a business. Even though the potential is big. We are thinking of ways to incubate these innovative products into businesses.."

The three informants highlighted that although entrepreneurship has been included in the 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka' scheme nationally, its implementation at UIN Jakarta still requires a stronger supporting ecosystem, both in terms of curriculum, infrastructure, incentives, and mentoring patterns. By building collaboration with external parties such as business incubator institutions, Islamic banks, or MSME players, this activity is expected to be activated in the next academic cycle.

Independent Study/Project

The implementation of independent studies or projects as part of the MBKM programme at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta is still relatively not actively implemented. RM from LPM straightforwardly stated that this learning model has not been a popular choice among students. He stated that:

"We don't have a project yet. So, it has not been fully implemented. Not many students are interested in following this, which is a limiting factor."

Although this scheme gives students the freedom to develop topics or projects based on their interests in a more independent and interdisciplinary manner, its implementation on the ground has not been moving. Ramdani also explained that the absence of independent projects is not caused by policy barriers, but rather aspects of student participation and understanding. The campus, according to him, has not actively established a special mentoring system to assist students in designing and executing independent projects. In addition, no evaluation model has been piloted to assess the academic success of the programme.

Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Sharia and Law expressed a similar view. He said that the concept of independent projects actually has great potential, especially for students who want to explore social issues in depth outside the course structure. However, to date, no students in FSH have proposed independent projects within the framework of 'Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka'. In the Faculty of Science and Technology, a similar response also emerged. WD I FST explained that independent projects have never been

formally run. Even if there are student activities outside the formal curriculum, such as the development of applications, tools, or experimental research, everything is still under the supervision of lecturers as part of the final project or regular research projects. In general, the implementation of independent studies or projects still needs strengthening in three ways: first, initial briefing to students about the types and forms of eligible activities; second, the establishment of a mentoring and evaluation system; and third, strengthening student motivation to dare to take independent and innovative learning paths.

Thematic KKN

Thematic KKN is one form of MBKM activity that has been actively run even before the MBKM policy was officially launched. WR I stated that KKN at UIN Jakarta has become part of the academic tradition, and MBKM comes as a policy reinforcement that expands the orientation and reach of the programme. He explained:

“For thematic KKN, we did implement it, even before MBKM emerged. KKN is indeed part of our programme. MBKM does strengthen the KKN programme, which previously only talked about the institution itself, now it becomes more widespread.”

KKN, which used to be localised, is now directed to be more collaborative and thematic. The concept of MBKM-based KKN is based on cross-sector, cross-discipline integration, and collaboration with non-campus institutions. One important aspect emphasised is the provision of supporting tools by the campus to ensure KKN activities take place in a systematic and measurable manner. He mentioned:

“From the campus, we mostly provide KKN guidelines, so that they are more organised and more conducive in their KKN practices. This includes various things, such as the guidebook, report guidelines, implementation policies, and so on. If I'm not mistaken, it's on the LP2M website.”

The Vice Dean I of FSH reinforced that KKN is a programme that is very relevant to the context of learning in his faculty. Many students from FSH are involved in KKN with the theme of community development, religious counselling, and media literacy. He stated:

“FSH students can utilise KKN as a platform to apply their communication knowledge in the community. They learn to develop programmes, work in teams across study programmes, and deal directly with social dynamics.”

Meanwhile, the Vice Dean I of FST sees KKN as an important opportunity to bridge science and technology with the needs of rural communities. Like:

“We direct students to bring simple technology-based solutions to the KKN programme. For example, a water filtration system, household waste management, or STEM education for children in the village.”

All three informants confirmed that Thematic KKN is a programme that has been running well and has the full support of the campus. The challenges are more technical and administrative, such as schedule adjustments, transport, and report management. However, substantially, this programme is considered an effective medium to ground academic values into the social space of the community.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta shows complex dynamics. In general, the university has shown institutional commitment in responding to this national policy, marked by the availability of ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’ implementation guidelines, cooperation with national and international institutions, and opening access for students to participate in several forms of off-campus learning activities. However, the implementation has not been fully equitable and still faces various challenges, both at the structural, cultural, and technical levels. Based on the findings obtained in the field, it can be concluded that UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta has partially implemented the ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’ policy, with notable successes in student exchanges and internships/practical work, as well as a growing collaborative research initiative. Meanwhile, the other five forms, namely teaching assistance, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurial activities, independent studies/projects, and village development, still face obstacles in implementation, both due to the lack of adequate support systems and the lack of operational understanding at the study programme level. In the future, strengthening internal policies, increasing ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’ literacy among lecturers and students, and developing a more flexible SKS conversion system are key in accelerating the implementation of this policy as a whole. With these systematic improvements, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta is expected to be able to carry out ‘Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka’ beyond compliance towards transformative educational practices, but rather as a transformative and adaptive educational strategy to the challenges of the times. ■

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